

Spring 2021 Option Studio

ARCH 463, Section Nr. 006

INSTRUCTOR: Roger Smith

Spring 2021

Shaping the Future of Cities: The Newark Civil Rights Museum & Center for Restorative Justice



Newark, 1967

Newark, 2020

There is...a politics to place construction ranging...across material, representational and symbolic activities which find their hallmark in the way individuals invest in places and thereby empower themselves collectively by virtue of that investment.

David Harvey

Sometimes we need to turn the symbols of oppression into symbols of learning and hope.

Junius W. Williams

STUDIO DESCRIPTION

The "Shaping the Future of Cities" studio challenges students re-imagine the American City and explore the possibilities for developing 21st century models for building an equitable future. The events of 2020 have highlighted a broad spectrum of persistent racial injustices and inequalities that have long plagued America and its cities. The death of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer was one incident, among far too many, that resulted in the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of police. It became a tipping point and led to massive protests demanding racial justice and the de-funding police departments across the nation. In response, Newark Mayor Ras Baraka, made an announcement outside of Newark's 1st police precinct that he would sign a new city ordinance diverting 5% of the city's public safety budget to support the conversion of the police precinct it into a civil rights museum and a headquarters for public services and violence prevention.

In the Summer of 1967, sparked by the arrest and brutal beating of a Black Newark cab driver, the 4th Police Precinct (now the 1st precinct) in Newark's Central Ward became the epicenter the "Newark Rebellion". The unrest began on July 12th and ended on July 17th. In those five days 26 people were killed, 700 injured and entire city blocks were left in charred ruin. The hot summer of 1967 also resulted in explosive violence in other cities across the country including Los Angeles, Harlem, Detroit, and Plainfield, New Jersey. They were all the result of many years of police abuse, extreme poverty, neglect and entrenched institutionalized racism that negatively impacted the lives of Black Americans.

The focus of the studio will be to transform the three story 10,000 SF 1st police precinct, the epicenter of the 1967 Newark Rebellion and a symbol of racial injustice, into an institution that preserves the collective memory of the community, serves the needs of the people and becomes a place for understanding and healing. The studio will be conducted in three phases. In the first, students will research the history of Newark and the conditions that led to the "Newark Rebellion" as well as conduct field investigations and urban mapping studies intended to reveal the complex layering of social, economic, cultural conditions in the Newark's central ward today. Following the research, students will participate in a community design charrette and assist in creating a collective vision for how the museum can have its highest positive impact on the community. In the second phase and third phases of the semester students will propose concepts for the proposed museum that integrates research, reflects the needs and vision of the community followed by the further development and refinement of individual architectural proposals.